

Benchmarking Best Practices Within Business & Finance

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October 8, 2010

University of Michigan
2010 Business & Finance Leadership Academy



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Executive Summary

In 2009, Business & Finance (“B&F”) hired Sibson Consulting to determine whether there is any correlation between B&F’s Employee Satisfaction Survey results and its Customer Satisfaction Survey results. The purpose of this initiative was to identify those workforce investments that can have the greatest impact on improving customer service. In October 2009, Sibson Consulting issued its report (the “Linkage Analysis”), which concluded that improving employee attitudes or perceptions in the following three key dimensions is likely to result in an improvement in customer satisfaction:

- Co-Worker Interaction
- Supervisor Effectiveness
- Unit/Department Commitment

See Attachment 1 for a copy of the Linkage Analysis.

Scope: Our charge was to identify best practices within existing B&F units that were likely to increase employee satisfaction in these three key dimensions. We were asked to focus on transferable best practices that could be easily implemented and sustained across B&F. See Attachment 2 for a copy of our charge.

Summary of Activities: We conducted focus group interviews with eleven diverse B&F units that had recently experienced significant increases in their employee satisfaction scores in one or more of the three key dimensions. See pages 5 through 8, *infra*. Based on information received from supervisors and staff, we were able to identify eleven transferable and sustainable actions that can be implemented throughout B&F that are likely to increase employee satisfaction in the three key dimensions. Those eleven actions are: Setting the Tone, Communicating, Listening, Valuing, Recognition, Flexibility, Team, Autonomy, Growth, All For One and One For All, and Fun in the Workplace. See pages 8 through 25, *infra*.

Recommendations: Each of the eleven transferrable actions is supervisor driven. Based upon our interviews and assessment, we confirmed that one’s supervisor is the strongest driver of employee satisfaction. For that reason, and given the nature of the transferable actions, we propose that B&F make additional investments in its supervisors. Our specific recommendation is that B&F create a B&F Supervisor Network that provides skill building related to the eleven transferable actions. This Network will also create the opportunity to communicate consistently with all B&F supervisors and for supervisors to interact across B&F, ask questions of their peers, and develop informal mentoring relationships, all of which would further the goal of spreading best practices amongst the widely diverse supervisors in our division. See page 25, *infra*. Finally, successful implementation of the B&F Supervisor Network will move B&F further towards achieving and maintaining its stated goals of being a Provider of Choice, an Employer of Choice and demonstrating Best in Class Leadership.

I. Background

In 2009, B&F hired Sibson Consulting to conduct an analysis of its Employee Satisfaction Survey data and its Customer Satisfaction Survey data to explore the relationship between employee attitudes and perceptions and customer satisfaction. Sibson Consulting concluded that employee satisfaction is linked to customer satisfaction, and issued a report detailing their findings (the “Linkage Analysis”). See Attachment 1. In the Linkage Analysis, Sibson Consulting concluded that B&F can increase overall customer satisfaction by improving employee satisfaction as it relates to supervisor effectiveness, co-worker interactions and department commitment (the “three key dimensions”). See Attachment 1.

We are members of the 2010 class of the B&F Leadership Academy. Our Action Learning Project, entitled *Benchmarking Best Practices within Business & Finance*, was to identify best practices currently being used in B&F that are likely to increase employee satisfaction in the three key dimensions. Specifically our project scope was:

Using the data from the Sibson-Consulting 2009 Attitudes and Customer Satisfaction Linkage Analysis, recent B&F Employee Survey and Customer Survey data, benchmark best practices in B&F units that are increasing employee and customer satisfaction. Use this benchmark data to provide focused recommendations to increase the scores on these metrics.

The project team will:

- Review those units identified as having high employee satisfaction scores or significant increases in employee satisfaction scores in dimensions related to increases customer satisfaction, with the exception of outliers.
- Assess potential barriers or obstacles to successful transfer and implementation.
- Suggest a mechanism for successful transfer and implementation.

The deliverable will focus on:

- Quick wins
- Transferability to other units
- Standard, repeatable processes
- Successful communication
- Being value added
- Elements that can successfully become part of B&F culture
- Next steps

A complete copy of our Project Scope and Overview is enclosed as Attachment 2.

This report details our research, analysis, findings and recommendations.

II. Data Analysis

A. The Linkage Analysis

Our charge states that we are to use the 2009 Sibson Consulting Linkage Analysis as our starting point. See Attachments 1 and 2. To conduct its Linkage Analysis, Sibson Consulting compiled a database with aggregate department-level data from the 2005, 2007 and 2009 customer surveys and the 2005, 2006 and 2007 employee surveys. Linkage analyses were then conducted using Pearson correlations. Linkage research correlates data from different sources with desired business goals. Characteristics of a work environment can be linked to performance indicators such as customer satisfaction. Linkages can help describe how and why certain business outcomes occur. Key relationships can be highlighted so they can be leveraged (in the case of positive outcomes) or understood and addressed (in the case of negative outcomes).

Linkage data can have practical implications for organizations, enabling them to identify important relationships and make predictions about business outcomes. Those relationships do not indicate causation, but do suggest an underlying pattern. As a result, B&F can help improve key performance outcomes by focusing on those areas where a linkage model predicts the best effect will be achieved.

The Linkage Analysis focused on the relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. Employee and customer satisfaction data was reviewed and analyzed to identify the interrelationships between employee's perceptions and attitudes and the satisfaction level of the customers they serve. Sibson Consulting's analysis shows that defining and assessing an organization's workforce satisfaction can provide important insights for customer satisfaction outcomes.

Overall, the Linkage Analysis indicates that employee attitudes and perceptions directly impact customer satisfaction. Further, the analyses suggest that improvements in employee attitudes and perceptions will result in significant improvement in customer satisfaction. B&F can increase overall customer satisfaction ratings by improving:

- Supervisor Effectiveness – focuses on improving overall supervisor effectiveness, including recognition of good work, trusting relationships, and openness and consideration of ideas.
- Co-worker Interactions – focuses on the tactics that are used to build better teamwork and collaboration, co-worker support and trust among co-workers.
- Department Commitment – focuses on building the level of pride and belonging that employees have with being a member of their specific department.

B. Methodology

With the understanding from the Linkage Analysis conducted by Sibson Consulting that Supervisor Effectiveness, Co-Worker Interactions and Department Commitment can have the greatest impact on increased customer satisfaction, we began our analysis by first building a framework for selecting target groups across the four Associate Vice President levels. We used the following criteria to identify those target groups :

- Using the three key dimensions as our guiding principles for having the greatest impact in increased customer satisfaction, we specifically looked at the following dimensions and outcomes in the 2008 and 2010 B&F Employee Satisfaction Surveys:
 - “Supervisor” dimension as it relates to Supervisor Effectiveness
 - “Co-Workers” dimension as it relates to Co-Worker Interactions
 - “Task Significance,” “Job Satisfaction” and “Workload” as they relate to Department Commitment
- In the spirit of finding best practices that are easily transferable between units, we sought to have parity and diversity from across B&F. In support of this concept, we selected units that widely represent B&F.
- We specifically focused on units that showed a significant increase in scores between the 2008 and 2010 Employee Satisfaction Surveys. There were units with higher overall scores or who demonstrated consistently increasing scores over time, but we selected units with the largest increases in scores in the relevant dimensions from 2008 to 2010, since we felt we were most likely to be able to identify specific actions that had caused the increased scores. It should be noted that additional levels of analysis in the future could include trending units over several cycles of employee satisfaction results, or focusing on units that are consistently high performers in the key dimensions.
- We intentionally excluded units that were believed to be unique within B&F, since such units might not have presented us with best practices that are easily transferable across B&F. Factors that we considered when identifying these units include organizational function, size and diversity of staff levels. Examples of such excluded units include the Treasurer’s Office, the Investment Office and Administrative Lead Teams.
- We also intentionally excluded units that had less than an 80% response rate in the Employee Satisfaction Survey. Additionally, units where employees were not surveyed in 2008 were excluded from our analysis.

- Lastly, in order to best achieve success from a project depth and content perspective and to keep the project at a manageable scale with the given time parameters, we determined that if we focused on approximately ten units, we would be able to meet our goals.

C. Results

Using the criteria noted above as guiding principles, we identified eleven units across B&F that met all of our criteria. These groups were recognized as having scored highest in one or more of the three key dimensions linked to increased customer satisfaction. A spreadsheet tabulation of each unit's dimension scoring can be found in Attachment 3. The eleven units are:

- Human Resources – Professional & Organizational Development
- Human Resources – Records & Information Services – Computer Support
- Human Resources – Records & Information Services – Service Center/Benefits Transactions
- Facilities & Operations – Plant Operations, Electrical Shop
- Facilities & Operations – Plant Operations, Roofing Shop
- Facilities & Operations – Department of Public Safety
- Finance – Procurement Services, Accounts Payable
- Finance – Financial Operations, Payroll Office
- Finance – Financial Operations, Student Business Operations
- Information Technology Services – Application & Information Services, Student Administrative Systems
- Information Technology Services – Application & Information Services, Research Administrative Systems

We also determined that the majority of these eleven units had significantly increased their scores in more than one of the three key dimensions. With this understanding, we decided to analyze some units from a multiple-dimension perspective, so we could consider potential correlations between dimensions and actions that were being taken that resulted in increased scores in those dimensions. Thus, although we identified eleven units, there were eight units assessed for Supervisor Effectiveness, three assessed for Co-Worker Interaction and five assessed for Department Commitment, as follows:

Supervisor Effectiveness

- Human Resources – Records & Information Services, Service Center/Benefits Transactions
- Facilities & Operations – Plant Operations, Electrical Shop
- Facilities & Operations – Plant Operations, Roofing Shop
- Facilities & Operations – Department of Public Safety

- Finance – Financial Operations, Payroll Office
- Finance – Financial Operations, Student Business Operations
- Information Technology Services – Application & Information Services, Student Administrative Systems
- Information Technology Services – Application & Information Services, Research Administrative Systems

Co-Worker Interaction

- Human Resources – Professional & Organizational Development
- Facilities & Operations – Plant Operations, Roofing Shop
- Finance – Financial Operations, Student Business Operations

Department Commitment

- Human Resources – Records & Information Services
- Human Resources - Service Center/Benefits Transactions
- Facilities & Operations – Plant Operations, Electrical Shop
- Facilities & Operations – Department of Public Safety
- Finance – Procurement Services, Accounts Payable

See also Attachment 3.

III. Findings

A. Methodology

Once our data analysis was complete, we met with the supervisors¹ and staff of the eleven units to ask what they felt increased their employee satisfaction scores on the three key dimensions from 2008 to 2010. There are 415 staff members and supervisors in these eleven units. Every individual was offered the opportunity to provide information to us either through a focus group, interview or web-based survey. In all, we conducted 21 focus groups and interviews with a total 187 individuals. An additional 35 individuals responded via survey.² Overall, we received input from a total of 222 supervisors and staff members, or approximately 53% of the supervisors and staff in these eleven units.

The goal of this effort was to gather information from supervisors to determine what actions they or others had taken to prompt positive change within their units, and then speak with their respective staff to ascertain what they felt had prompted the positive

¹ For the purpose of this report, the term supervisor refers to supervisors at all levels, including directors.

² Individuals were not required to identify themselves; therefore, it is possible that a supervisor or staff member could have attended a focus group and also completed a survey. For examples of the surveys, see Attachments 4 and 5.

change. We then compared the supervisors' reported actions with staff perceptions. Specifically, whether an action reported by a supervisor (whether undertaken personally or by others) was perceived by that supervisor's staff as having a direct positive influence on them in the dimension at issue. We also took care to note whether there were actions identified by staff, but not their supervisors, as having a positive influence on their work group and their employee satisfaction scores within the dimension at issue.

Some supervisor interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis, but most supervisors were invited to a focus group that specifically concentrated on the employee satisfaction dimension for which their unit had been selected. Supervisors whose units were selected for more than one of the three key dimensions were invited to participate in each relevant focus group. Supervisors who were unable to participate in the focus groups or who wished to provide additional information outside of the focus group setting were offered the opportunity to participate in an on-line survey. See, for example, Attachment 4. We note with interest that only two of the eleven workgroups had specifically focused on increasing employee satisfaction scores and within those two, only one had focused on one of the three key dimensions that are the focus of this report. The remaining supervisors, however, had all purposefully taken action intended to address a specific problem in their workplace and that action clearly had an impact on employee satisfaction.

Staff were interviewed by work unit, generally outside of the presence of their supervisors. Some of the eleven units identified through our data analysis consist of several work groups. For example, the unit identified as "HRRIS – Record & Information Services/ Computer Support" consists of three work groups: Record Services, Information Services, and Computer Support, each with different supervisors. All three work groups were interviewed separately, as this was the most effective way to ensure the data being collected could be compared to their supervisor's comments. While it was not always feasible to interview workgroups separately, this was done when possible.

As discussed above, the eleven units were selected based on their significant increase in employee satisfaction scores in one or more of the three key dimensions since the 2008 Employee Satisfaction Survey. For this reason, it was important that we focus only on those changes that would not already have been reflected in the 2008 survey. Our questions were intended to solicit that information, and in addition, we frequently asked follow up questions to ensure that we could differentiate between those changes that had occurred since the 2008 survey and those practices that were not necessarily new, but which were perceived as having a positive impact on employee satisfaction. Longstanding practices that would have been reflected in the 2008 survey results were not considered in our assessment.

After the interviews were complete, we first separated the information we had gathered from each unit by the dimension regarding which the supervisors and staff had been interviewed. We then, for each unit and each dimension separately, compared staff comments to supervisor comments, to verify that the supervisors' reported actions (or

actions by others) were identified by staff as having had a positive impact on them. We also looked for those actions cited by staff that may not have been specifically mentioned by supervisors. Finally, we compared the findings from the units to identify those actions that were repeatedly pointed out as having been effective in improving employee satisfaction on the relevant dimension at issue. Ultimately, we were able to identify actions within each dimension that were consistently mentioned as having a positive influence on employee satisfaction.

Once we arrived upon the various actions that were having a positive influence in the three key dimensions, we then undertook further assessment. Specifically, we looked for diversity and whether these actions had been identified across the diverse B&F groups with whom we met. Since our ultimate goal is to identify actions that are transferrable across B&F, this was a particularly crucial step in our analysis. B&F has an extremely diverse staff, whether in terms of the nature of the work, length of service, bargained for or non-bargained for, and various other factors. Taking our diversity into account, and after further refinement, we have identified two to five actions per dimension that have been successful in the units in which they were employed and which are immediately transferrable across B&F. We have used quotes from supervisors and staff to illustrate the various actions we identified. Quotes are verbatim where possible, although minor changes were made as necessary for readability and to protect identities, since many staff requested that their responses remain confidential.³

B. Supervisor Effectiveness

In the Linkage Analysis, the Supervisor Effectiveness dimension is identified as one dimension of employee satisfaction that is directly linked to increased customer satisfaction. Sibson Consulting recommended improvement efforts targeted towards the following questions from the Employee Satisfaction Survey that are related to supervisor effectiveness:

- [My supervisor] treats me with respect
- My supervisor creates an environment that fosters trust
- Overall, how would you rate your supervisor
- [My supervisor] recognizes me for doing good work
- [My supervisor] considers my ideas

See Attachment 1. As discussed immediately above, in Methodology, we met with supervisors and staff from across the eight units that had experienced a significant increase from 2008 to 2010 in the Supervisor Effectiveness dimension.⁴ Our purpose was to

³ Most staff who requested confidentiality did not explain their request. A few indicated that they did not want to be perceived as making negative comments about their previous supervisors.

⁴ The units that experienced significant increases from 2008 to 2010 in the Supervisor Effectiveness dimension are:

ascertain what action had been taken since 2008 that was identified as having an impact on supervisor effectiveness in their respective units. Interestingly, all eight of these units experienced supervisory and/or managerial change, so that at least some staff in these eight units, and in a few cases all staff, have different managers and/or supervisors than they did in 2008. Staff readily spoke of the different actions that they feel make their current supervisors more effective.

Based upon our interviews and assessment, we have identified five specific actions that staff consistently stated increased their scores on the Supervisor Effectiveness dimension, and which are transferrable across B&F: Setting the Tone, Communicating, Listening, Valuing and Recognition.

1. Setting the Tone

Staff and supervisors alike discussed the importance of the supervisor setting the tone within the unit. Some indicated that the mood of the entire office was directly affected by the example set by the supervisor, whether it was by getting along with other supervisors or departments, or having a positive attitude. Other staff said that long standing issues within their units were improved or resolved when their supervisor indicated that behavior needed to change and then consistently and effectively modeled that behavior themselves. Staff stated that examples set by their supervisors have improved how they feel about their work, and that they feel more connected to their units and departments than they did in the past. This is particularly important to our research, because Department Commitment is one of the three key dimensions linked to increased customer satisfaction. Indeed, three of the eight units selected because of their increased scores in the Supervisor Effectiveness dimension were also selected for their significant increases in their Department Commitment scores.⁵

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- HRRIS Record and Information Service, Service Center and Benefit Transaction Team (Human Resources)
 - Plant Operations Electric Shop (Facilities & Operations)
 - Plant Operations Roof Shop (Facilities & Operations)
 - Department of Public Safety (Facilities & Operations)
 - Payroll Office (Financial Operations)
 - Student Business Operations (Financial Operations)
 - Student Administration Systems (Information Technology Services)
 - Research Administrative Systems (Information Technology Services)

See Attachment 3 and page 5, supra.

⁵ The three units are:

- HRRIS Service, Service Center and Benefit Transaction Team (Human Resources)
- Plant Operations Electric Shop (Facilities & Operations)
- Department of Public Safety (Facilities & Operations)

Supervisors offered the following comments about specific actions they have taken to set the tone:

- [As a supervisor] I try to put what we do in the perspective of public service to remind staff that the tasks we do are not just tasks, but part of this overall mission.
- I focus on finding the good.
- My staff and I are kind to each other. Kindness breeds kindness which makes for a happy, productive staff.
- I lead by example, being there every day, using good problem solving skills/decisions, being a good listener and showing compassion.
- Managers don't miss our staff meetings – attendance demonstrates commitment.
- First we had a change in the department head that encouraged first line supervisors to immediately address concerns, rumors, etc. and get the best resolution possible. Second, I [as the supervisor] made it clear what was in it for the [employees] to bring their concerns forward for resolution and helped them do it in a positive, not negative, fashion. Supporting your first line supervisors and enabling them to resolve problems or make operations change is huge. Employees respect first line supervisors more, and that ultimately leads to effective communication and cooperation.
- Previously groups didn't get along, so we started monthly group meetings. We started talking about their different functions and supervisors stressed the importance of working together [and demonstrated positive working relationships between themselves]. Supervisors also would not listen to "us v. them" talk, and reminded staff that we need each other to do our jobs.

Staff offered the following comments about how their supervisors set the tone or the positive effect of their supervisor setting the tone:

- My direct supervisor leads by example, showing what a tremendous commitment he has made to this agency. Anytime you see your supervisor putting in that type of effort it makes you work harder.
- Shift supervisors have been more positive about how they deal with employees and are willing to work on finding solutions to perceived problems. They are demonstrating good leadership.
- [I think our scores increased because of the change in] front line supervision and their positive attitudes.
- Our [former] supervisors used to hate each other. It created a rift between our two units. The supervisors fought - they were like kindergarteners and fought in front of staff in staff meetings. Now our supervisors get along [and as a result we get along

See Attachment 3.

much better, too.]. There is a determination that the two departments will get along.

- We are helpful to each other because our supervisor is helpful to us and vice versa.
- Our supervisor always has a happy, open, cheerful, consistent demeanor [even during a time of personal loss]. Her spunkiness gives us spunkiness.
- We [staff] have overcome a lot of past personal internal issues. We're putting the job and professionalism first, above personal issues. [Our supervisor] stressed putting the job and professionalism above personal issues.
- [Our supervisor's] positive attitude and not being negative makes you want to do a good job.
- When people talk about "things starting from the top, they're right." [Our department head] creates room and space for "autonomy." She creates an environment that allows people to be empowered and to soar. She makes sure people understand that it's ok to make mistakes. She helps staff learn from their mistakes and encourages them to "move on" to the next step. You've got to have support from your leadership – if you want people to do a good job it starts there.
- I think when a supervisor is positive about work and life in general, it makes a big impression on employees.
- All the supervisors get along now. That trickles down to us staff.

2. Communicating

Many of the supervisors in the eight units who saw significant increases in Supervisor Effectiveness scores said they focused on better communication; the staff in these units noticed and attributed their increased Supervisor Effectiveness scores at least in part to this effort. Staff in all eight of the units noticed that their supervisors are better at communicating with them than they were two years ago, including setting expectations; communicating expectations to their customers; and communicating to their department, division and the University about the nature, challenges and opportunities of their unit's work. Staff felt the communication they received was honest and that there was more transparency. Staff and supervisors in particular noted the importance of sharing information as it is learned, versus waiting until a final decision can be announced. Significantly, staff who were interviewed on the Department Commitment dimension, discussed below, also frequently mentioned positive changes in communication as one basis for their increased scores on that dimension, and some of their comments are also included below.

Supervisors offered the following comments about specific actions they have taken to improve communication:

- Communicate work expectations. Staff appreciate clear expectations, targets to hit.
- We review our operational statistics with staff. They get to see how we're doing as an organization and where we're falling short.

- We make sure that staff have an idea of what success looks like and understand the connection between what they're doing and how it contributes to meeting larger organizational goals and mission.
- You need to communicate both ways, up and down. Up need to know how staff feel and think. Sometimes that's not well received, but it's necessary.
- I think one concern [on the 2008 survey] was the lack of communication from the top down. I make sure whatever information I receive is shared with my staff first hand so they do not hear about it from someone else. Everyone wants to be in the know of what's going on. So it's my responsibility to keep my staff informed.
- I [started] explain[ing] to staff the reason behind certain decisions when they are made.
- I invite staff to my weekly meetings with my lead team. Anybody can come. [Some limits are set on number of staff attendees].
- [To reduce gossip,] I work with supervisors in my department to minimize the zone of distortion. We ask staff if we've been clear.
- Tell them what you know, even if you don't know everything.
- Not communicating until things are final creates more anxiety.
- We have a morning chat. It represents time to catch up with one another. I can pass along emails/information and ensure all see it and hear it. Also we spend time each morning discussing and finding solutions for issues from co-workers.
- [We have] "daily check-ins," just to see if anybody is experiencing frustrations, to trade solutions and to let others know what they're working on.
- We have frequent staff meetings to share information.
- Supervisors/managers/staff meet on a regular basis. Some areas are even closed down so that staff can participate in discussion about what's going on in a particular work area or across the larger organization. Everyone is expected to attend the meetings – you can't miss them. We've even implemented a tracking system so that co-workers can have easy access to information on what people are working on. This helps co-workers feel more connected to each other and better understand the work of other work groups.
- We've tried to create a work environment where there's trust and it's ok to make mistakes. [We help staff understand how their work] connects to the University's mission. We talk about these things in our staff meetings all the time.
- Our team meets twice a week and we go over work issues and we can have the overhead and look at our problems. We would be less effective if we couldn't meet. It's teambuilding and educational to look at our problems together.
- I encouraged supervisors to be leaders, not managers. To lead you have to be respected. To be respected you have to communicate.

Staff offered the following comments about how their supervisors communicated or the positive effect of the changes in communication:

- [My supervisor is good at] communicating expectations to customers.

- I think the expectations of the supervisors has been more clearly stated and in turn allows [us] a better understanding of what is expected of [us]...I was constantly given feedback from my supervisor as to my job performance.
- We knew what the goals of our shops were. We knew expectations, we knew what our part of this big wheel is and we hopefully could build that wheel.
- The supervisors are open and transparent.
- The supervisor knows how to phrase management's views so it's received well.
- Passing information down. When she knows something she will share her knowledge. They may not know everything, but they share.
- I think there is more trust in leadership, as leadership has worked hard to dispel the myths about "managers out to get people, or [they] will retaliate..."
- We have more communication, idea sharing, more face-to-face time in the morning. [Our supervisor] allows us to talk to one another about job problems. He is more mellow...he doesn't shoo us out in the morning when we're discussing [our work].
- Communication is honest. Management doesn't lie.
- Staff trusts supervision and the administration more. Our current [leader] tells it like it is.
- Better communication from supervisor and from director to staff. More visibility into what is going on. More information [is given to us] in staff meetings, this has changed, more stuff, quantity.
- [Our supervisor] makes sure everybody hears. We've increased the number of meetings we have [where information is shared], but with all of us together and project meetings.
- [Our supervisor] is able to explain the broader picture of [our work] so that it makes it easier to see how we fit in [our departmental] puzzle.
- We don't just do typical jobs [that one would expect given our titles]. [Our supervisor] understands this and conveys this message upward. [She] puts forth the effort to show the value of non-standard activity.
- [Our supervisor] is a good translator of information. Also, we now feel less pressured to conform to the broader [department work style] model. We're not traditional. We do more concentrated work, which keeps us in isolation. We're cave dwellers. Our office doors are shut a majority of time, or we aren't on campus. And this used to be looked at negatively. But [our supervisor] is very supportive and uses scorecards to show how productive we are. By tracking everything we do, she is able to show and justify our nontraditional work processes.
- [Our supervisor] works hard to show the value added by our department. Great things are said up the chain, and that's uncommon in my opinion.
- She can explain up the chain what we do differently.
- Good shift supervisors [who]...are willing to put themselves out there and speak on everyone's behalf to encourage necessary changes.
- Going into challenging projects, [our supervisor] tells the customer this is new, there could be challenges/mistakes. We're going to learn along with the customer.

3. Listening

Staff across all eight units repeatedly mentioned how important it was to them that they are listened to and that they receive an honest response. They do not expect that their supervisor will always agree with their idea, but appreciate when the supervisor explains why a particular idea can't be put into effect. Some staff in these eight units indicated that they have a new supervisor who is better at listening to staff, and that their previous supervisor's attitude was that they were "always right" or "knew all the answers." Many staff attribute their supervisors' increased commitment to listening as one reason for their unit's increased scores on the Supervisor Effectiveness dimension. As with communication, listening also came up repeatedly in those units that experienced increased scores in the Department Commitment dimension.

Supervisors offered the following comments about specific actions they have taken to listen to staff:

- When [staff] concerns are addressed they know they are being listened to and valued. This fosters buy in to the unit and sense of ownership. [As a result,] staff are not as reserved about speaking their mind.
- I [as a supervisor] became a better listener. I demonstrated more positive behavior and encouraged the same from all employees.
- We conduct 360 performance reviews for all supervisors; they're given feedback from their staff. Supervisors are expected to review the information and take seriously what staff are saying about their performance. In many ways, supervisors look forward to hearing about their staff's perception of their work. It helps them get a better sense of what they're doing right and what things they could do differently. We have seen improvement in the relationships just not only between colleagues, but also between staff members and supervisors.

Staff offered the following comments about how their supervisors' willingness to listen had a positive effect on them or their unit:

- [Our previous supervisor] did not listen to the employees about certain changes that had failed miserably, but [our current supervisor] will listen and let you know that he appreciates our input.
- He came from [another company and he] had to learn from us all our processes and procedures. He sat down and learned each process from us. He listened.
- [My] voice matters. I'm being heard. If this stopped I would look elsewhere.
- I found that my supervisor that sought my input on items generally was more effective in supervising me and the shift as a whole.
- She listens and always remains positive. She doesn't let us stay down and encourages involvement and persistence.

- A lot of managers are “I don’t care if you don’t like it, this is your job.” Not the case here. We talk through the issue, why it is, and work through it.
- They take your concerns into consideration. Sometimes they can’t do anything about it.
- [They will tell you] “here is why we can’t do anything about it.”
- The new supervisors came in and learned the job. They recognized that we know more about our jobs than they do. Managers are listening to staff. It’s okay to share bad news, too. Listening to me trumps everything else.
- I feel comfortable bringing issues forward.
- [Our supervisor] asks different people’s opinions, what needs to happen. He’s willing to ask, he’s willing to ask whoever.
- Supervisors listen. Sometimes they look overwhelmed, though.
- Our department has supervisors that acknowledge they may not know everything, and they help us find answers when none of us know them.
- Issues that I talk about with my supervisor never come out on my review. If they did, I’d stop talking.
- Our new supervisor is fair, she considers our ideas and she follows through. We trust her. She has a true open door policy.
- Our supervisor considers our ideas more.
- They are listening and responding to what employees tell them.
- Our supervisors strive to be effective decision makers. She works to solve her staff’s problems and does a great job of following up on their concerns.

4. Valuing

Staff in these eight units emphasized how much they were impacted by supervisors who consistently showed genuine interest in them as individuals and also valued their work. They reported wanting to do a better job for these supervisors as a result, and directly attributed this action to their increased Supervisor Effectiveness scores.

Supervisors offered the following comments about specific actions they have taken to value staff:

- You foster the value in staff when they know their jobs are important, when they know they are valuable to the organization and what they do matters.
- The employees in my unit were assigned their own buildings, thus creating a persona of ownership to...implement their own ideas and their own approach to new [work issues]. Just being in touch with my staff, caring about how they are doing the job and making sure they understand the value they bring to the organization.
- I believe our scores went up because [our staff] are treated with respect as human beings. Additionally, we try to make their work life as enjoyable as possible and have earned their trust.

Staff offered the following comments about how their supervisors show them they are valued and the impact it has:

- There's a genuine interest in the employees. On a daily basis. Not a week goes by where there's a non-business interaction. They stop and talk, ask how you're doing. It affects your work. It's not fake. [They care about what's happening] in and outside of work. That factor makes every one of us want to do a great job for them....it makes me want to do 110% more. [They] appreciate everything we do.
- I'm not [just a] body doing a job. I've felt that way other places.
- They ask our opinions. We're not just bodies filling a desk.
- [In the past two years] outside of work we all went through at least one major crisis. At work, supervisors are human and care about us and [they] are not just about [checking off] that I was here or absent and how much work I got done.
- [My supervisor] has people skills. We're a person and not a number.
- They make us feel like they really care about us, not just our work.
- Many of us have been here for so long. There's a lot of knowledge here. Leadership is dependent upon us to help in a situation to pull things together and go forward. There's a level of respect and they tap into us when necessary. This is smart business.
- She has a level of respect for our knowledge. She will come in and sit with me and ask me about what I do. She comes to us knowing she doesn't know it all.

5. Recognition

Another area that was repeatedly mentioned by staff as having a strong and positive impact on their Supervisor Effectiveness scores was recognition. Staff differentiated between recognition programs, which they did not specifically identify as having an impact on their scores, and consistent recognition by and feedback from their direct supervisor. Many supervisors in these eight units indicated that they had worked diligently to increase staff recognition, either through increased customer feedback, supervisory feedback, or both. The issue of recognition also arose when interviewing staff on the Department Commitment dimension.

Supervisors offered the following comments about specific actions they have taken related to staff recognition:

- I made sure my staff knew that I appreciated their work and how good it was. I also looked for recognition for them outside the unit. I nominated one staff member for [a recognition award] and they were selected.

- [Our leader] has done a lot to publicly recognize staff accomplishments. In the past staff felt too uncomfortable being singled out for praise. I think the recognition and communication fostered a feeling of belonging and pride in the department.
- I continue to tell them, individually and as a group, how valuable they are. I compare them to other units so they see more value in how they do their work. I even reverse how we do our customer service, by asking them how they would feel if they were the customer and then did we do enough.
- I say thank you every day for what they do.
- We provided more feedback to staff. [We] especially focus on mentioning the things they were doing that were positive
- Some of the work that staff does is really repetitive, other work is more knowledge-based with a lot of requirements for data and adherence to regulations or special considerations. Some of the work is time-consuming because of the nature of customer interactions even with simple requests. We have an amazing group and it's important to showcase staff's work. We do a little bit in terms of rewards, but try to do a lot around recognition.
- Two units, which are quite different from one another, have a place specifically for hanging up thank you notes and compliments received from customers. One unit refers to it as its "Wall of Fame," and the supervisors report that staff will often stand and read each other's kudos and then talk about them later, since their work is of such a nature that compliments are rare, therefore making every thank you something for all staff to celebrate. Supervisors in both units say that they make a "big deal" when staff receive this type of recognition.
- One leader said that he solicits positive feedback. For example, when he receives a compliment regarding one of his staff, he asks the person if they would mind sending him an email to that effect so he can forward it to the staff member. This person also verbally passes along positive feedback, saying "it's a day to day thing, in the moment." He added that he also handwrites thank you notes to his staff.

Staff offered the following comments about recognition and its impact:

- [Recognition helps] temper day to day normal job stress.
- There's much more recognition of the employees.
- [Our supervisor] says thank you to those that go above and beyond.
- If you have a really [bad] day and everybody gets their job done, the next day he actually says good job.
- Yeah, he actually says thank you. It makes a big difference.

C. Department Commitment

In the Linkage Analysis, the Department Commitment dimension is identified as one of the three dimensions of employee satisfaction that is directly linked to increased customer

satisfaction. Sibson Consulting recommended a focus on areas known to improve levels of commitment, such as job satisfaction, “the work itself,” and workload. See Attachment 1.

As discussed above, in Methodology, page 6, we met with supervisors and staff from across the five units that had experienced a significant increase from 2008 to 2010 in the Department Commitment dimension.⁶ As a starting point for our conversation, we showed staff the following bullet points from the Employee Satisfaction Survey that focus on Unit/Department Commitment:

- I am proud to work for my unit/department
- I have a strong commitment to my unit/department
- I care about the future of my unit/department
- I feel a strong sense of belonging to my unit/department
- I enjoy discussing my unit/department with people who do not work here

Our purpose was to ascertain what action had been taken since 2008 that staff identify as having a positive impact on their commitment to their respective units. We note that all five of these units experienced supervisory and/or managerial change, so that at least some staff in these five units, and in a few cases all staff, have different managers and/or supervisors than they did in 2008. Staff readily spoke of changes in their units or departments that contributed to their increased commitment.

Based upon our interviews and assessment, we have identified four specific actions that staff consistently stated increased their scores on the Department Commitment dimension, and which are transferrable across B&F: Flexibility, Team, Autonomy and Growth.

1. Flexibility

Flexibility was a predominant theme in the focus groups and surveys. Not only did this issue come up in all five units in which the Department Commitment scores had significantly increased, it also frequently arose in our discussions with the other six units that were questioned on the other two key dimensions. Staff repeatedly mentioned that

⁶ The departments that had significant increases from 2008 to 2010 in the Unit/Department Commitment dimension are:

- HR Records & Information Services/Computer Support (Human Resources)
- HR Service Center and Benefits Transactions (Human Resources)
- Plant Operations Electric Shop (Facilities & Operations)
- Department of Public Safety (Facilities and Operations)
- Accounts Payable (Finance)

See Attachment 3.

they have more flexibility now than they did in 2008, and the significant positive impact it has had on them.

Staff identified flexibility as improving their work/life balance and increasing their productivity by allowing them to focus and work without distraction. For staff, flexibility includes telecommuting, flexible work hours, flexible scheduling, and “spontaneous flexibility,” such as asking in the morning to take the afternoon off or needing to telecommute with no advanced notice due to unscheduled school closings.

There are no specific comments about flexibility from supervisors, although they noted that it was important for them to have the support of their supervisors and upper management in order to make flexibility available to their staff.

Staff offered the following comments about flexibility and its impact:

- Telecommuting is now available – we can work on projects without disruption.
- Telecommuting keeps me here. Work/life balance is very important. [According to the staff in this unit, flexibility is a new initiative since 2008. They say that they approached their supervisor about it, who asked them to assemble a business case in support of their request. She considered their business case and their request was approved.]
- Flex scheduling is new. We expanded it in the past two years. It started when gas prices were high. You can work 4 10 hour days.
- Telecommuting allows me to focus on special projects. It’s more productive.
- Spontaneous flexibility is okay.
- If I do need to leave with the kids, she says “Do what you need to do.” I want to make sure I get the work done because she allows me the flexibility.

2. Team

Staff repeatedly mentioned a sense of belonging to their department, that they are part of a team, that their work group has chemistry and is special, in the sense that it is unlikely they would find a similar group of people in another workplace. These staff indicate that they enjoy one another’s company, have a collective sense of humor and feel their supervisors are good at hiring staff who will match their unit’s distinct chemistry. Some staff feel it helps that they understand the pressures their co-workers face in their jobs, either because they do the same work or have been cross trained in their area. A few supervisors in these units mentioned that they had intentionally cross-trained their staff in an effort to increase understanding and teamwork. In a similar vein, some supervisors had their staff take assessments, such as StrengthsFinder and Myers Briggs, so that they could learn more about one another and better understand their unique motivations and strengths.

Team was also consistently mentioned by units selected for their increased scores in the Co-Worker Interaction dimension. Some of these comments from staff are also included below.

Supervisors offered the following comments about specific actions they have taken related to improving their team and sense of team:

- One supervisor discussed the value of doing Myers Briggs with her unit. She learned that her staff is almost entirely introverted, whereas she is strongly extroverted. She said that although it is difficult, she has altered how she communicates with her staff and does so through staff meetings and other controlled settings, versus excitedly seeking them out when new issues arise, which to them feels like an interruption and disruptive.
- I get [all levels of staff] involved in projects that build the department, so they will have pride in it and see it as something they built.
- It would be from supervision down that the employees are all knowledgeable about workload. Special groups are formed to improve rules/regulations and procedures which by involving the employees seems to make everybody feel a team effort is being considered.
- One director, noting that there are some staff who cannot be satisfied, said “It’s not my job to make [staff] happy, but to provide an atmosphere for morale to flourish.” He added that he has made it clear to chronically dissatisfied staff that he will not allow them to spread their dissatisfaction to others.
- A sense that I contribute to the improvement of the community in which I work and the ability to help others make a career out of the jobs they perform.
- Cross training, collective training. Cross training also helped build trust amongst staff and helped staff value one another.
- We engaged in cross-training activities between areas. As a result, we increased communication, collaboration and more positive interactions between workgroup areas and co-workers. Staff were able to experience each other’s work from a different perspective. Cross-training was key in allowing people to understand the pressures and stress of the colleagues’ jobs.

Staff offered the following comments about the importance of team, how it was developed, and its impact:

- This is a great collaborative environment.
- We all do the same job, we know what each other are going through and this makes us a closer unit.
- We all like to laugh and have a sense of humor.
- Everyone in the department helps to make the environment work. We talk, laugh and are able to depend on one another to get the job done.
- Our entire team did Myers Briggs, the DISC and Strengths Finder.

- We went through Myers Briggs. We know one another's type.
- I like working with this group. The team works together. It's never me versus them.
- Everybody has a good work ethic, everybody goes above and beyond. You feel compelled to do a good job to do your share. There's camaraderie.
- I like [the people] I work with. We back each other up. I can trust them.
- I feel comfortable going to anyone for anything. You know what each person does well.
- I can ask the same question multiple times and my co-workers don't get frustrated.
- The creation of the Police Benevolent Association has also allowed for more informal gatherings, i.e., another way to communicate and learn about each other...away from the workplace.
- There was no past focus on [staff being] happy, just on professionalism.
- There is a sense of family within our department. You know that no matter what you are going through personally or professionally there is always somebody available who is willing to help you get through whatever it is you are going through.
- Staff now have light conversations, which didn't happen in the past [when management was very production oriented versus the current management which has a customer service focus].
- Our supervisor insists on cross training. It makes it easier, we have a backup. Work isn't piled up when we get back. You know that when you leave your work is getting done and done right.

3. Autonomy

Staff in these five units consistently mentioned autonomy. When staff were asked what might cause them to leave their department, "micromanagement" often was mentioned. Autonomy is important to staff not only in the sense that it affects dignity, but also in that it has a direct, positive impact on their productivity. Staff in these units (and in all units with which we met) are extremely concerned about doing high quality work and being productive, and according to staff, actions such as micromanagement are demoralizing and decrease productivity.

Autonomy was also consistently mentioned by the staff with whom we spoke about the Supervisor Effectiveness dimension, and some of the comments offered by staff in those units are included below.

Supervisors provided the following comments about how they create and maintain autonomy:

- We give staff control over how the work gets done. In fact, we look for ways or places where staff can have as much control over things as possible.

Staff provided the following comments on autonomy and its impact:

- The latitude that we're given here. My other department was rigid. You couldn't deviate from standard procedure. [Our supervisor] is looking for us to bring her process improvement ideas.
- I'm more productive because we have the latitude. It causes us to think outside the box.
- It encourages you to do more than what is asked of you. I'm more productive because I want to be.
- The laid back management helps. If you're nitpicked it makes you passive aggressive.
- I can bring up anything I want. They're open to suggestions. I can try something new.
- The change in my supervisor's supervisor has had an impact also. I think that we are better able to try different development approaches and have fewer constraints placed on our ideas and creativity.

4. Growth

Staff also repeatedly mentioned growth as one reason their Department Commitment scores had increased. While staff also appreciated career development opportunities, they specifically mentioned growth within their current positions as affecting their commitment to their current department.

One supervisor offered this comment:

- We encourage career growth, support, taking ownership and pride in one's work, involvement and helping others to succeed.

Staff offered the following comments about the impact of growth:

- There's encouragement for growth and job responsibilities. It makes you more committed to do a good job. The department is invested in me, and I want to help the department. There's a sense of belonging. There's encouragement to do what I am strongest at – where I could be the most help.
- Our supervisor challenges us. Gives us projects to explore and run with.
- Being able to take classes and training that keep us abreast of changes in our field.
- We are given the opportunity to grow as individuals in a team setting.
- [Our supervisors] rotate tasks and increase responsibilities.
- Management asks for volunteers for new things. They fill work using staff strengths.
- I'm challenged every day. I love my job.
- [My commitment to my department increased over the past two years because] I have taken on additional duties as the job role changes.

- We also have opportunities to develop outside the standard job description. We are encouraged to participate in the [department's] community.
- I now have been given responsibility. Before it didn't matter if I messed up. [This comment was from a person interviewed in the Co-Worker Interaction dimension.]

D. Co-Worker Interaction

1. All For One and One For All

Shared vision and responsibility was perhaps the most consistently mentioned element amongst the five units that were asked about their increased Co-Worker Interaction scores. Staff report that they work in environments where they help one another and that the hierarchy in their units is flat, to the extent that every person is prepared to perform any task as needed. Staff specifically noted that their supervisors have promoted this attitude, which is very similar to the discussion of “setting the tone” that arose with those units asked about increases in the Supervisor Effectiveness dimension. See page 9, above. In essence, supervisors and staff in these units say that their units now have an “all for one and one for all” atmosphere.

Supervisors offered the following comments about specific actions they have taken to create this atmosphere in their unit:

- I tell them frequently they are my kind of team! They step up all the time to support each other when there is a need. May times they will work things out amongst themselves. I tell them I appreciate them for being committed, reliable and dedicated to doing a great job.
- I make sure people see me answering the phone and directing people in the hallway. It's the little things.
- I looked for team players in making new hires. I used behavioral interviewing questions and gave assignments so could I could assess if applicants had the traits was looking for.

Staff offered the following comments about how their supervisors created their sense of shared vision and responsibility, and the impact it has had:

- Everybody pitches in. Nobody's above doing any particular job or a menial task.
- There's no feeling of title or rank issues. [People are] not above doing the work that needs to be done.
- Our supervisor is not afraid to do things herself. She's in the grind with everyone.
- [From a unit that went through a reorganization and also hired some new staff] The new hires created a work environment that is less hierarchical, where some have important tasks and others have less important tasks. We now feel valued and

empowered. Everybody's ideas are considered and matter. There was a class system, some people wouldn't make their own copies, but now it's gone. We're all in it together. We have a shared vision.

- [Our attitude is] if you fall, we all fall.
- If the phones get busy, [our supervisor] will jump right in and start answering.
- Our supervisors aren't above any task. The supervisors all jump in.
- There's never ever blame [or finger pointing]. There's a sense that things can and will go wrong, but you don't get blamed. You learn from your mistakes.
- [Our supervisor] will help you with problems and assist until it's completed. We assist each other. We don't let each other down just because it's not our job [to do the task].
- I can go to somebody and ask for help and I know it is going to be done right away. I trust that the work will get done and taken care of.
- Throughout the whole department, people ask if you need help with anything. You hear "let me help," not "That's your job, not mine."

2. Fun in the Workplace

Supervisors in the five units that were interviewed on the Co-Worker Interaction dimension consistently noted that there is an increased effort by direct supervisors to "schedule fun." Staff have noticed and indentified these activities as having positively influenced their scores on the Co-Worker Interaction dimension. Staff report that the ability to interact with their co-workers over non-work matters impacts their feelings towards their co-workers.

Supervisors offered the following comments about how they added "fun" to their units:

- We have all new supervisors. The previous supervisors only focused on tasks and getting things done. [A manager from this department interjected that the previous supervisors didn't schedule any fun. They just worked for the numbers.] We new supervisors celebrate results as well as getting things done.
- We made it a point to focus on "building up" the team to encourage more involvement or engagement from staff and as a way to address staff's concerns about being confined to their work areas. Often, there was little opportunity for staff to get out of their "caves." The "Lighthouse Tour" is an example of what we tried to do to link activities with the University's strategic objectives like M-Healthy and have fun as a workgroup. [The Lighthouse Tour was a group effort to use a walk station to "walk" to various lighthouses in Michigan. Staff logged their mileage while working at the walk station and collectively they completed their journey. This unit has since undertaken other "travels" with their walk station.]
- We engaged in group activities to foster team spirit, such as ActiveU and staff appreciation day.

- Supervisors need to allow for informal team building, such as congregating around the front desk to talk. It's getting business done, like informal hallway meetings. Some of the best ideas come from these.
- It's like your bank account. It doesn't come all at once, but it provides yields.

Staff offered the following comments about workplace fun and the impact it has had:

- We have summer picnics and holiday parties.
- Every other month we have a potluck and celebrate birthdays.
- We [now] have more face-to-face time in the shop. There's more interaction. And we're gaining more from each other's knowledge and expertise.
- We have fun while doing our work. To others we might seem out of control, but we get work done. There isn't anything older than 24 hours on our desks.
- We don't take ourselves too seriously.
- We make fun of each other.
- We eat lunch together every Friday, but I work from home on Fridays. I want to come in on Friday's just for lunch.

IV. Recommendations

Each of the eleven transferrable actions identified immediately above is supervisor driven. Based upon our interviews and assessment, we confirmed that one's supervisor is the strongest driver of employee satisfaction. For that reason, and given the nature of the transferable actions, we propose that B&F focus on continued intentional investments in its supervisors.

Our specific recommendation is that B&F create a B&F Supervisor Network ("Network") that provides skill building related to the eleven transferable actions. This Network will also create the opportunity to communicate consistently with all B&F supervisors and for supervisors to interact across B&F, ask questions of their peers, and develop informal mentoring relationships, all of which will further the goal of spreading best practices amongst the widely diverse supervisors in our division. In addition, the Network will allow for supervisors to build high quality connections and a community amongst themselves with a strong sense of identity as a B&F supervisor.

A. Elements of the B&F Supervisor Network

Our recommendation for the Network is multi-faceted. Any one of these elements could be implemented without the other, although when combined they form a strong support and educational structure for supervisors across B&F throughout their supervisory careers. The Network also entails different forms of communication, which allows for individual learning styles.

1. Supervisor On-boarding

A supervisor on-boarding program provides B&F the opportunity to welcome new supervisors, communicate the overall mission and vision of B&F and establish what the culture of the organization should look and feel like. During on-boarding, B&F can inform new supervisors of its expectations for supervisors, as well as those best practices identified in this report. The “Quick Hits” document enclosed as Attachment 6 may be helpful in this regard. On-boarding ensures that information is shared in a timely and consistent manner. In addition, new and recently hired supervisors will gain a sense of belonging and obtain insight to the overall vision and culture of the organization. The objective is for participants to come away from this experience with a sense of clarity, responsibility and team.

We recommend that the initial on-boarding meeting be conducted by a senior level official within B&F. The cost of this initiative is likely to be moderate in terms of money (e.g., refreshments, photocopies of materials), but potentially high in terms of burden placed on the senior level official or officials conducting the on-boarding sessions. Coordination costs may also initially be high until staff determine best practices for organizing the meetings, at which point coordination costs should be low to moderate.

2. Network Groups

Our second recommendation as it relates to the Network is that B&F establish small groups of supervisors to meet regularly for the purpose of education, networking and mentoring.

a. Group Size and Diversity

Each person on our team is a member of the B&F Leadership Academy. We highly value the skills we have learned and the opportunity to connect with our peers across B&F. We appreciate that absent Leadership Academy, we likely would not have had the opportunity to form the diverse business and personal contacts and friendships that have resulted from our academy experience. We anticipate that these connections will serve as a source of professional encouragement, growth and support for many years.

We feel that one key element of our successful Leadership Academy experience was the size of the Academy class: twenty-four. This size is small enough that each class member has become well known to us, but large enough that as a whole we represent the diversity of B&F. For this reason, we recommend that the Network be comprised of small groups of supervisors, ideally twenty to thirty, and that each group represent the diversity of B&F. One important aspect of creating diverse groups is that doing so will ensure that supervisors have the chance to connect with other supervisors outside of their immediate

work area, thereby creating the opportunity for broader feedback and understanding. It may also create an environment in which a supervisor feels “safe” seeking information they might not otherwise seek from within their department.

In terms of diversity, one issue we considered was whether groups should be separated by years of supervisory experience. After much consideration, we recommend that groups consist of supervisors with all levels of experience, versus creating separate groups for newer supervisors and supervisors with many years of experience. We feel that combining supervisors at all levels will yield a more diverse and dynamic group, where supervisors can learn from and be challenged by one another. As such, after a new supervisor goes through on-boarding, we recommend that they be added to an existing group, versus creating new groups in which only new supervisors are members.

b. Educational Content, Timing and Cost

One extremely important aspect of the Network is the educational offerings. Initially, we recommend that Network meetings focus on the eleven transferable actions we have identified that relate to improving supervisor effectiveness, department commitment, and enhancing co-worker interaction. As such, initial Network meetings should focus on skill building in the following areas:

- Setting the tone
- Communicating
- Listening
- Valuing
- Recognition
- Flexibility
- Team
- Autonomy
- Growth
- All For One and One For All
- Fun in the Workplace

While some sessions might involve more formal training, we recommend that at least one of the sessions involve panel discussions with some of the supervisors and managers from the eleven units we analyzed. We are available to make recommendations as to those supervisors and managers who may be particularly well suited to serve as a panelist.

As discussed below, the Network is only likely to remain vibrant and yield results if the research on which it is based is reassessed in the future and if the programming is interesting, relevant and fresh.

The cost of this aspect of the Network is high, including staff time to create and maintain the groupings, development of educational content, potential cost of refreshments and room rental and supervisor time to attend the sessions; however, yield is potentially high as well. While we did not do a formal analysis of yield from the supervisors in the eleven groups, anecdotally, supervisors using best practices told us that they spend significantly less time on negative staff interactions and that overall they feel their units are more productive. To the extent cost is considered prohibitive, further research regarding yield may be warranted. We also note that there are other possible benefits from the Network, such as networking and mentoring opportunities, that have no additional cost but potentially high yields in terms of supervisor effectiveness and satisfaction.

c. Networking and Mentoring Opportunities

We recommend that all educational sessions include exercises that allow attendees to interact and get to know one another. In addition, we recommend that each session have time either before or after the session for attendees to talk and reconnect with one another. Although we have no formal research on the subject to include with our recommendation, it is our collective experience that such opportunities allow participants to connect on a deeper level and engage in informal problem-solving. We anticipate that allowing for these types of interactions will enable supervisors to share information with and “teach” each other and discuss strategies for effective supervision. We also anticipate that these connections will permit informal mentoring relationships to develop; however, it may be desirable to ask some of the most effective supervisors we found within our eleven units if they would agree to take on formal mentoring relationships with supervisors who are having difficulty increasing their employee satisfaction scores in the three key dimensions.

The networking and mentoring opportunities have no cost associated with them, since they are an anticipated byproduct of the Network group sessions.

3. B&F Supervisor Specific Web-based Information

We recommend that B&F also provide web-based information for its supervisors, so that supervisors have continuous access to a “service toolkit” on best practices, tools for effective leadership, and a knowledge base for Q&A about leadership issues and strategies. We note that there are existing websites that are extremely helpful to supervisors, such as University Human Resource’s Managers Toolkit available at hr.umich.edu/toolkit.html; however, none of these sites focuses exclusively on B&F or the specific skills necessary for successful B&F supervisors.

We recommend that B&F provide web-based information, possibly in a website concept similar to the Cost Control and The University Budget websites that were launched in May 2010. This site would serve as a central resource for news, information, issues and

activities related to topics that provide support for B&F supervisors. It will allow for communication of key messages regarding the initiatives identified from our research and provide links to a variety of existing resources.

An exciting feature of this website could include social network style functionality with an interactive and searchable forum. The goal will be to drive engagement by helping supervisors connect across B&F. This increased access and exposure to each other will allow users to seek specific expertise on issues or project knowledge from one another. Users could post ideas and questions and others could offer comments and helpful suggestions. Supervisors will also gain appreciation and a better understanding for the diversity of our B&F services.

The website could be located as a link off of the main B&F website, and we believe it will be a useful tool in engaging all supervisors across B&F, since we do not assume that all supervisors will benefit equally from the communication style of Network's group sessions.

4. Communication of Project Findings

If B&F leadership decides to move forward with some or all aspects of the Network, we recognize that the startup effort will be substantial and there will likely be a significant delay between the issuance of this report and the beginning of the Supervisor Network. For that reason, we recommend that B&F make this report and the Linkage Analysis widely available to B&F supervisors. Supervisors can take immediate steps to incorporate the eleven actions identified in this report, and can do so with confidence that they will have a positive effect on employee and customer satisfaction.

To further assist in communicating the findings of this report to supervisors, we developed a one-page document called "Quick Hits" that summarizes the eleven actions that can be taken now by every supervisor in B&F. See Attachment 6.

B. Implementation

We recommend the appointment of a team to address implementation issues related to the Supervisor Network. Some questions that the implementation team will have to consider include, but are not limited to the following:

- How to organize such a network?
- How many staff will be required?
- How to make the network diverse?
- Should there be multiple networks for the different levels of management (Sr., Intermediate and front line)?

We recommend that the implementation team include an individual(s) with a high level of expertise in developing educational programs, such as Catherine Lilly, Senior Advisor to the Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer. Ms. Lilly's experience developing and implementing the B&F Leadership Academy would be of particular value, and it may be that other individuals who assisted in the development and implementation of the Leadership Academy have expertise or experience that would enhance Network implementation efforts as well. It may also be helpful to include staff from Human Resource Development and experts in Positive Organizational Scholarship. We further recommend that the implementation team consist of, or consult with, select supervisors or managers from across B&F who can assist in indentifying and recommending solutions to potential barriers to successful rollout. Finally, we would be happy to assist the implementation team in any way that may be helpful.

To the extent the implementation team or others determine that is not feasible to provide one or more aspects of the Network to all B&F supervisors, we have provided some data that may be useful in determining where to focus available resources. Attachment 7 provides department-level data regarding supervisor to staff ratio. Attachment 8 provides the number of supervisors in each department grouped by years of service. Attachment 9 provides department-level data regarding projected retirements over the next few years.⁷

C. Assessment and Duration

We recommend that B&F commit to the Network for a period that would allow for two Employee Satisfaction Surveys and two Customer Satisfaction Surveys to be completed. We feel that this time period permits sufficient time for B&F to determine whether the Network is having a positive impact in both areas, but also provides a date by which B&F will assess whether further investment of this type in its supervisors is warranted.

In addition, we recommend that B&F, either as a future Leadership Academy Action Learning Project or otherwise, reassess the Linkage Analysis and the research in this report as the results of each Employee Satisfaction Survey and Customer Satisfaction Survey become available. We make this recommendation for two reasons: (1) further linkage analysis may provide more refined information regarding the correlation between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction that would allow B&F to more strategically apply its resources; and (2) further analysis of units increasing in the three key dimensions (assuming further linkage analysis confirms the three key dimensions) may reveal additional or altered best practices.

⁷ All data for these attachments was provided by Human Resources Records and Information Services.

D. Barriers and Other Considerations

We must acknowledge the potential barriers to the successful implementation of this recommendation. There are obvious barriers such as cost, resources and support; however, we recognize that unit readiness, the ability to keep the information current, and the changing workforce over the next five years also plays a part. We also recognize that supervisor skepticism or fatigue may be a barrier. It may be that a smaller scale pilot Network will can be used to develop enthusiasm and broad scale buy in.

Another potential obstacle may be perceived lack of time. During a time when we are continually asked to do more with less, supervisors may feel that they simply can't find the time to devote to improving employee satisfaction. It may be helpful to build a business case that reminds supervisors that their time spent on employee satisfaction now will yield time savings. Unhappy staff cost the supervisor time and B&F money through complaints, mistakes, poor customer service, decrease in morale, and higher turnover. The benefits of investing time up front outweigh the alternatives. Supervisors should be encouraged to reallocate their time to make their participation in the Network rewarding.

Conclusion

We have identified units in B&F that recently saw significant increases in their employee satisfaction survey scores in one or more of the three key dimensions linked to increased customer satisfaction. After meeting with many of the supervisors and staff from those eleven units, we were able to pinpoint eleven transferable, sustainable actions that staff felt led to their increased satisfaction. All eleven of these actions are supervisor-driven.

With this information, we considered various mechanisms for applying the eleven transferable actions across B&F, and determined that additional specific, consistent and intentional investment in supervisors across B&F was warranted. As such, we recommend that B&F establish a Supervisor Network consisting of both in-person and web-based content. B&F has clearly stated goals to be a Provider of Choice, an Employer of Choice and to demonstrate Best in Class Leadership. Our recommendation is directly tied to these three goals and will move B&F forward towards achieving and maintain them. Further, we believe that the eleven transferable actions are unlikely to be successful if solely set forth as a mandate, but that they can successfully become part of B&F culture through consistent application and education.

We appreciate the opportunity to assist B&F with this important work and would be happy to answer questions about our work or provide additional information if doing so would be helpful.